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American School  
of Classical Studies  
at Athens

AN ANCIENT FOUNTAIN IN THE AGORA AT  
CORINTH

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[PLATES VII-X]

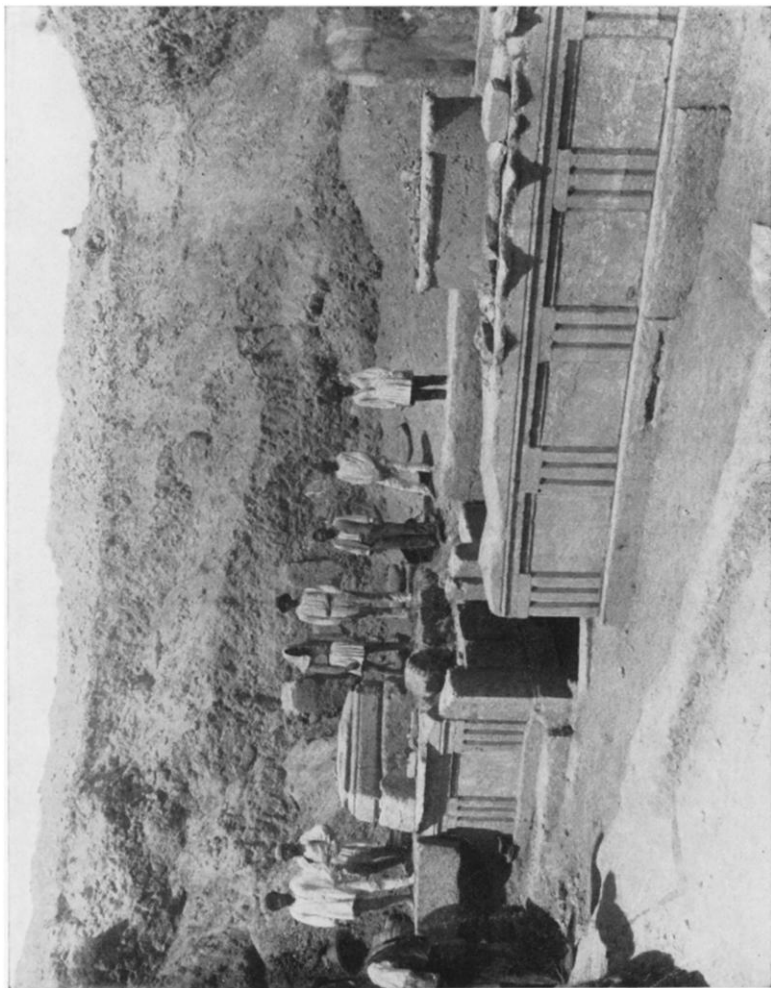
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THE ancient fountain discovered in the excavations of 1900 inside the Agora of Corinth, about twenty-five metres west of the west end of the Propylaea, and briefly noticed in the Director's Report of that year (*Am. J. Arch.* 1900, Suppl. p. 24), could not at that time be adequately described, inasmuch as a portion of it still remained unexcavated. Now that the excavation of it is completed, it deserves a full description. Not only on account of its peculiar structure, but also on account of its good preservation, it takes its place alongside of the fountain Pirene and the temple of Apollo as one of the most interesting monuments of the old city.

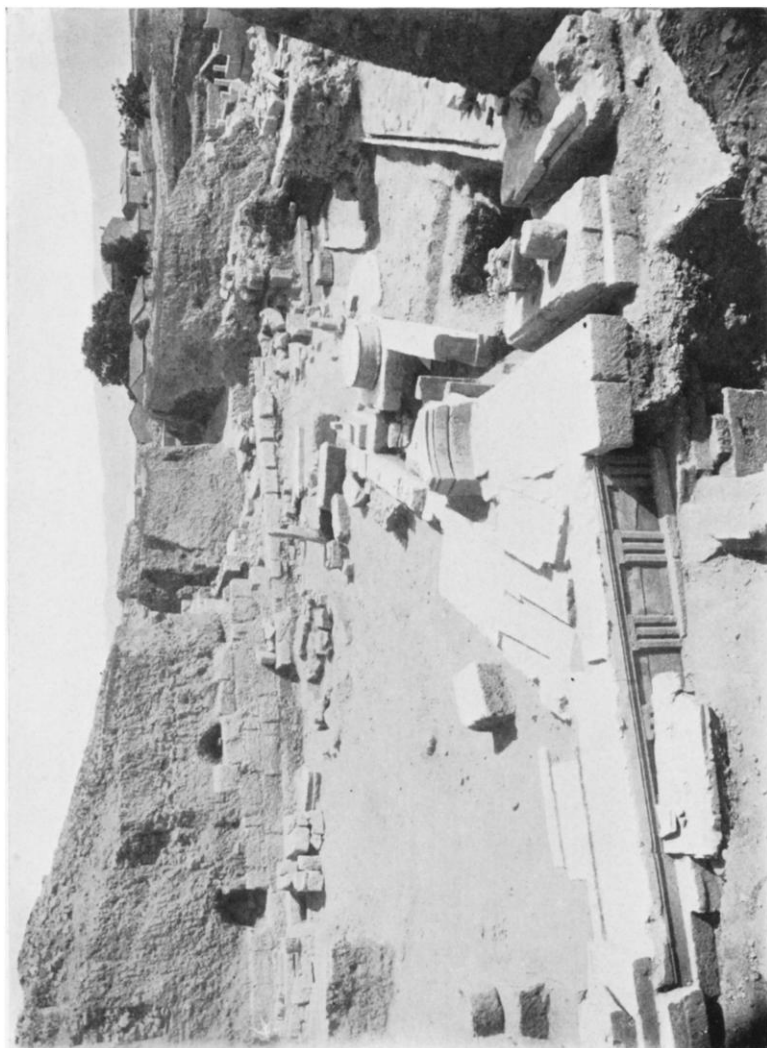
It consists of two parts, the fountain proper, and a Doric frieze of metopes and triglyphs enclosing it; the latter, being the part that first meets the eye, may properly stand first in the order of presentation. Its ground plan is shown in Fig. 1.<sup>1</sup>

PLATE VII gives a view of the east side, PLATE VIII a view from a point above it from the south. Figure 2, drawn by Alexander Lykakes, architect of the Greek Archaeological Society, gives the elevation and profile of the triglyphon. The system consists of a long east front and a shorter south front. The former does not run exactly north and south, but from east of north to west of south, and joins the south side at an obtuse angle. Its line is broken, the middle portion being projected

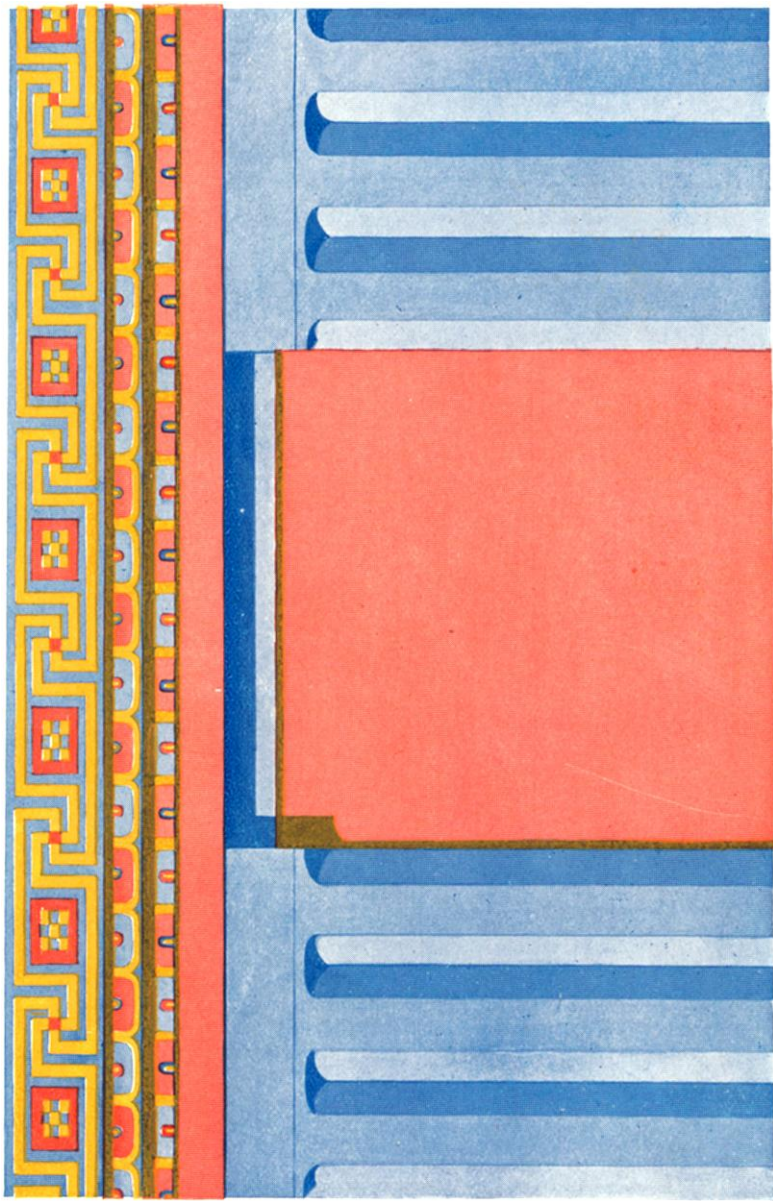
<sup>1</sup> All the drawings of the fountain, unless it is otherwise stated, were made by Mr. Benjamin Powell, Fellow of the American School at Athens.



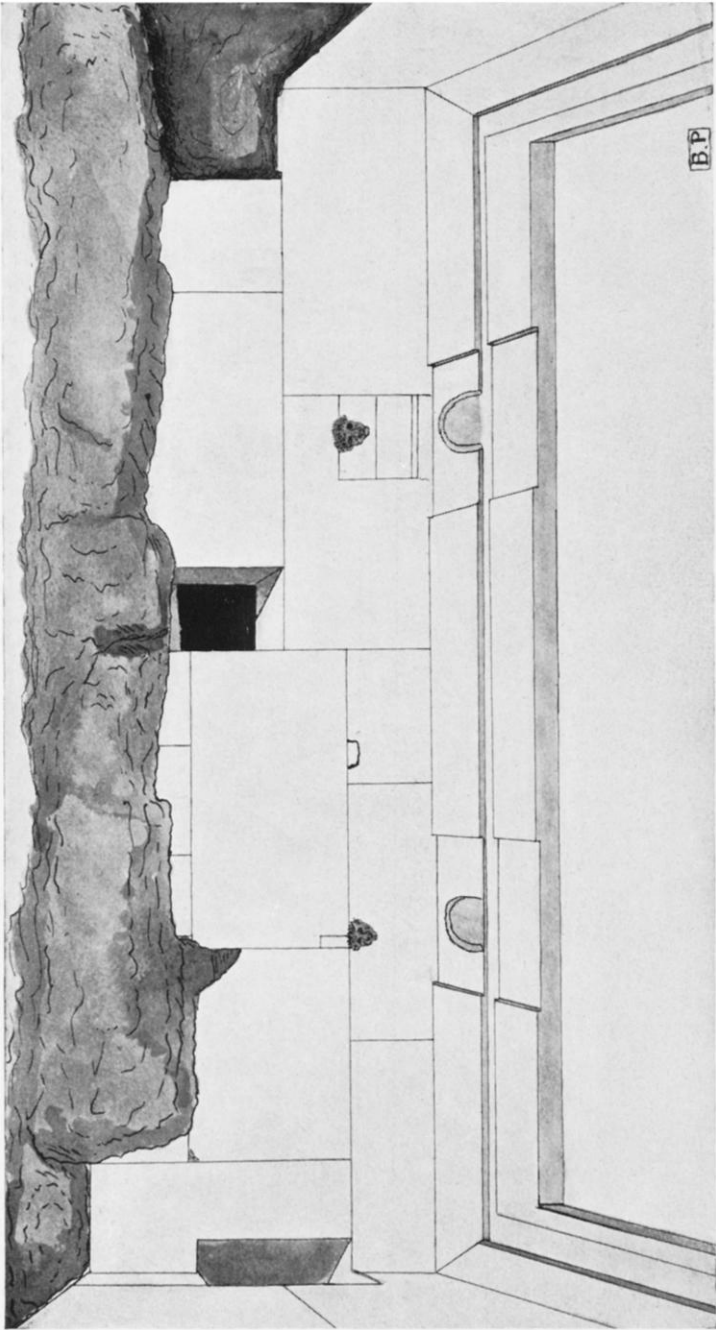
ANCIENT FOUNTAIN AT CORINTH: VIEW OF THE EASTERN SIDE



ANCIENT FOUNTAIN AT CORINTH: VIEW FROM THE SOUTH



ANCIENT FOUNTAIN AT CORINTH: COLORS OF THE TRIGLYPHON



ANCIENT FOUNTAIN AT CORINTH: ELEVATION OF INTERIOR

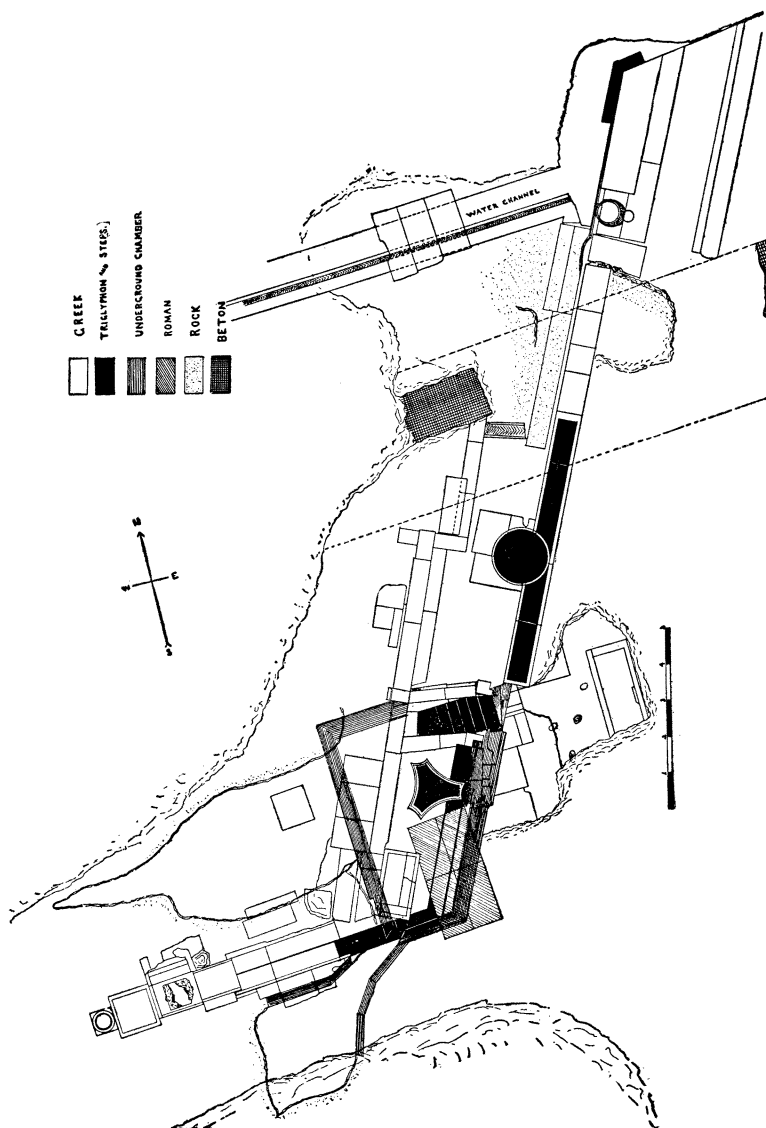


FIGURE 1. — ANCIENT FOUNTAIN AT CORINTH: GROUND PLAN.

somewhat to the front. Of the northern part a good deal is lacking. The last block to the north has smaller dimensions than the rest of the system; and being separated from the rest by quite an interval, leaves an opportunity for conjecture about the destruction and restoration of this part;<sup>1</sup> and where the system at the north end of this block takes a turn in a more easterly direction it consists of a plain block set on edge. With these exceptions the system is in an admirable state of preservation, even to the stucco and the paint upon it. On the south side, which must have been first covered up by the earth, the preservation of the paint is most perfect.

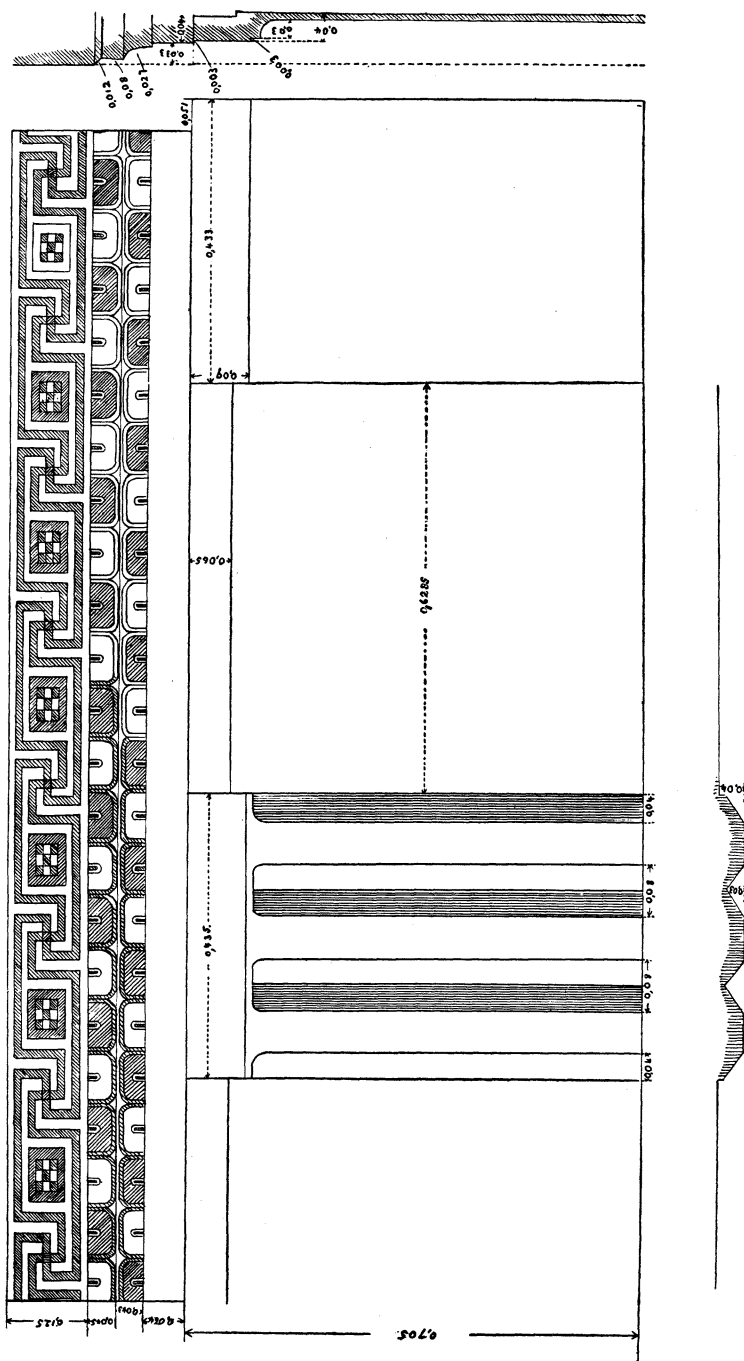
Behind the triglyphon a platform was constructed on a level with the top of it, with an extension to the rear which made it reach to the soft rock, which here rises to the surface, as its support. On this platform now stand two bases, one round and the other triangular with truncated angles, extending forward over the top of the triglyphon itself nearly to its front edge, and apparently forming a part of the system to which the triglyphon formed an ornamental front. Farther south is a quadrangular base in alignment with the east front, but of course out of line with the south front which it approaches. Toward the north end the platform is broken away along with the triglyphon. North of the door to be described later the only part of it that remains is what was apparently held in position by the round base; but it can hardly be doubtful that it was once continuous up to the north end.<sup>2</sup>

The material of the triglyphon, like that of the platform and the bases, is a very soft, friable, poros stone, like that which constitutes the mass of the Isthmus of Corinth. From the nature of the material the coping, which projected 0.09 m. to the front

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the triglyphs of this last block have just the distances which fit the intercolumniation between two Doric columns that were found in the very last days of the work on a slender stylobate, apparently of a porch, about ten metres to the west, up against the temple hill.

<sup>2</sup> It is not unlikely that disturbances in this quarter were caused by the laying of the rubble foundations of a porch which extended westward from the Propylaea across the fountain and somewhat farther to the west.





of the band over the metopes and triglyphs, has been much broken away, some of it during the excavations, in spite of our efforts to preserve it. North of the door for a distance of about 1.50 m. the surface of the triglyphon has been worn away to a depth of half a foot or so, probably by people passing over it when it was partially exposed.

On its south face the triglyphon ends at a distance of 4.78 m. from the southeast corner, and is succeeded by one block which continues the upper part of the unpainted moulding of the block above the metopes and triglyphs, while these are lacking. Then succeeds a course of plain stone, in the top of which another course now partially lacking was bedded. In this upper course, so far as it is preserved, is a continuous bedding for something else, presumably a statue base or bases. Next follows a square base, then a plain unfluted column, its lower part consisting of a round base without moulding. These are all of the same material as the bases along the east front. With the column the system comes to an end; but the line is taken up and continued much farther to the west by a series of quadrangular bases of evidently later date, and in no organic connection with the fountain façade.

In the triglyphon (see PLATE IX, from a reproduction by A. Lykakes) the colors are distributed according to the usual laws of ornamentation of Doric temples. These colors are red, blue, and yellow. The triglyphs are blue, and the metopes red; the low band at the top of each of the metopes is blue, to separate the red field of the metopes from the continuous red band above. On these parts the color is practically obliterated; but that of the moulded band at the top, being longer protected from the influence of the weather by the coping, was at the time of the uncovering distinct in every detail. On the two narrow mouldings below, the arrangement of the red and the blue godroons is exactly that which appears in Fenger, *Dorische Polychromie*, Tafel 7, which includes the Parthenon, the Theseum, and the Propylaea of Athens, the two temples at Rhamnus, the temple of Sunium, and the Hera

temple at Selinus. On the lower of these two mouldings, which is concave, the blue godroons are under red ones in the upper band, which is plain but projects forward at the bottom. On the broader top moulding the double maeander of yellow deploys itself in a blue field around red squares with smaller squares of blue and yellow included in them. Little squares of red are inserted at the crossings of the lines of the two maeanders.

When this system was intact, colored with exquisite taste, and appropriate to a series of statues, it must have been very beautiful. But after all it was but a frame for something else.

Through a break in the eastern façade of the triglyphon there is an approach by a flight of seven steps to a room trapezoidal in shape, the floor of which is about 2 m. below the top step. (See Fig. 3, for the ground plan, and PLATE X, for the elevation and perspective.) The steps descend along the north wall of the room. The west wall of the room serves as a support for the edge of a stratum of conglomerate rock similar to that which appears in Pirene<sup>1</sup> supported by cross walls. But it also serves as a fountain façade. Two lions' heads of bronze are affixed to it, through which water once flowed. Along this façade and the sides adjacent to it is a raised band about 0.15 m. higher than the rest of the stone floor of the room. In this is cut a groove for carrying off the water, at an interval of 0.31 m. from the wall. Along the façade it is only 0.12 m. broad, but along the adjacent sides of the room it has a breadth of 0.30 m. Where the groove passes under the lions' heads, semicircular cuttings are made at the sides of the groove to complete a circular hollow for holding the pitchers while they were filling. The gutters along the side walls pass to the front underneath the wall which closes the room to the front. The space back of the façade wall is approachable through two openings. Here one can trace back under the conglomerate stratum for nearly thirty feet the semicylindrical open grooves lined with

<sup>1</sup> *Am. J. Arch.* IV (1900), p. 208.

bronze, through which the water was conducted to the lions' heads. Figure 3 will make clear this arrangement.<sup>1</sup>

It is obvious that there must have been a time when the fountain was once open to approach at this lower level, and that the surplus water flowed off on the surface. The massive irregularly built wall, which runs obliquely across the once square floor, was clearly built at some later time as a support for the triglyphon, which here had to cross a void, while north of the door it rested on beaten earth and the ledge. Excavation in front of the wall revealed the floor continuing forward a little way, but being then irregularly broken at the front edge. There can be no doubt that it once continued about a metre and a half farther, to the edge of the reservoir (see Plan, Fig. 1), which itself probably had a discharge pipe by means of which the water could be used farther down, or simply conducted off. The reservoir is 1.00 m. deep and 1.00 m. broad. Its length it is impossible to determine, as at a distance of about 2.50 m. from its north end it runs under a line of bases which we did not wish to disturb. Its walls are composed of single blocks of poros placed on their edges (*orthostatae*) and lined with fine stucco. The blocks of the west wall are lacking, but the cutting for them plainly appears in the hard white clay which we reached at a depth of 10 m. below the surface of to-day, and which we hailed with delight as virgin soil.<sup>2</sup>

All the space excavated in front of the front wall of the room had been filled in with hard earth which contained very few fragments of ancient objects of any kind. What became of the fountain when this filling was done, it is difficult to see. We

<sup>1</sup> Between the two lions' heads now preserved, but considerably nearer to the southern one, there was doubtless once another, to which a southern branch of the northern channel is seen to have led. The façade shows a piece of stone inserted here to fill the orifice once filled by the lion's head.

<sup>2</sup> The tall column of earth left standing near at hand, and called in modern Greek *μάπτρνα*, is an eloquent "witness" to the labor which it has required to get down to this ancient level. The heights are as follows: from the surface down the top of the triglyphon, 5.50 m.; from the top of the triglyphon down to the floor of the room, 3.50 m.; from this floor down to the bottom of the reservoir, 1.00 m.

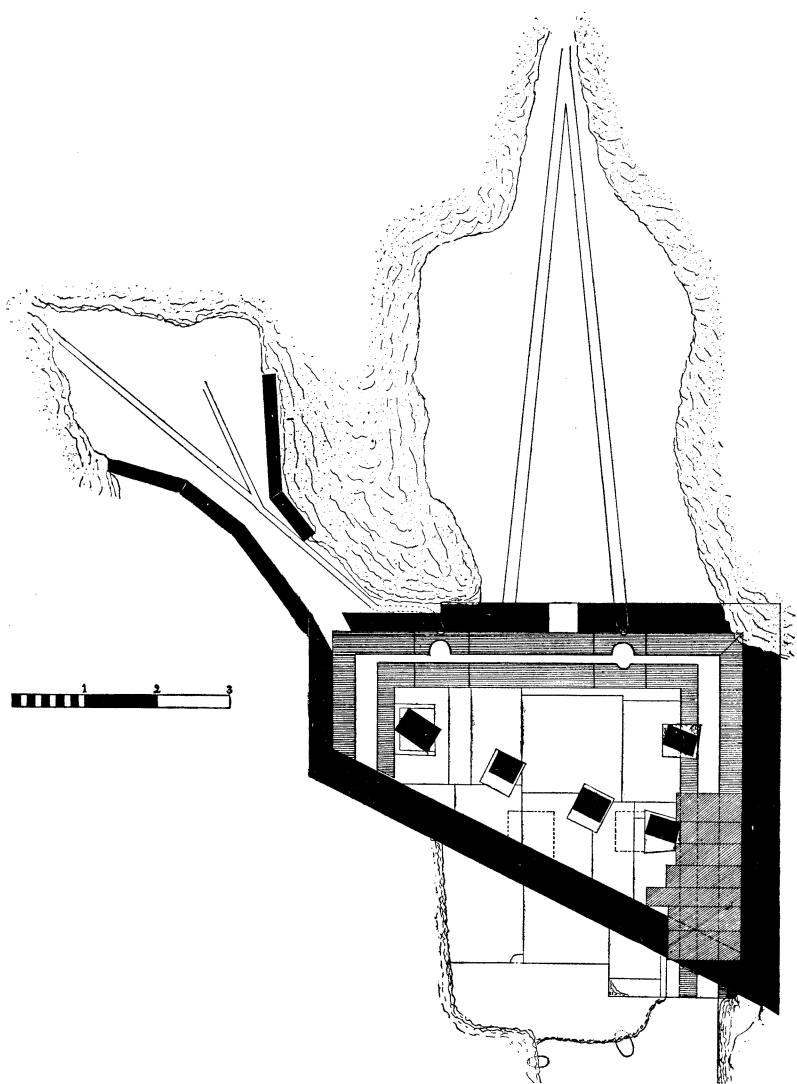


FIGURE 3. — ANCIENT FOUNTAIN: GROUND PLAN OF EARLIER PORTION.

have discovered no provision for conducting off the water under this eight feet of earth; and yet the flight of steps shows that pains were taken to make the fountain still accessible after the level was raised. Any occasion for discarding or changing the fountain can be discovered only approximately. On the floor, besides the five irregularly placed supports for the top, there are traces of beddings for two other supports in a line parallel to the façade with the lions' heads. A third, if it existed, would now be covered by the oblique wall; but it is almost demanded, to make a symmetrical arrangement. It is not improbable that the conglomerate stratum here once extended farther to the front, as it does a little farther to the north; and that the side walls with these three pillars formed a façade not unlike that of Glauce,<sup>1</sup> only with smaller proportions. The projecting stratum may have fallen in by its own weight assisted by an earthquake. In fact the very jagged edge of the part now remaining lends some color to this hypothesis.<sup>2</sup> The remodeling thus demanded brought with it perhaps not merely the providing a new covering, but the irregularly placed pillars and the front wall to support it. So much being done, an approach to the fountain would have to be made over the wall; and to save the labor of mounting, one may have conceived the idea of filling up in front, a procedure all the more rational if, as one may suppose, a good deal of earth had already begun to accumulate around the front of the fountain from the higher slopes back of it. And then came the triglyphon to keep the whole system from being hidden in the earth, and to hide the shapeless ledge by its extensions to the north and to the west.

We may now discuss the date of the two adjustments; and here lies one chief interest of the fountain. In the brief report, already alluded to, I spoke of the triglyphon as having been put together, at the time of the Roman rebuilding of Cor-

<sup>1</sup> *Am. Jour. Arch.* IV (1900), p. 463.

<sup>2</sup> The ledge made a very low ceiling for the room, 1.45 m. above the floor. The women must have been obliged to bend over a good deal in filling their pitchers. Visitors who now stoop down to inspect the lions' heads are apt on rising to hit their heads against the ledge.

inth, from ancient Greek buildings then lying in ruins. I am now convinced that it is much older, and that the blocks of which it is composed were made for this very use and none other. My former assumption that the Doric triglyphon was used only in the entablature of buildings must give way before certain considerations, even if they lead us to a unicum in architecture.

The general impression produced on one at first glance, that he stands before a Greek structure, needs some tangible evidence before it can become hardened into a conviction. My conviction rests upon the following pieces of evidence :

(1) Although the metopes and triglyphs and the first continuous band above them look as if they might well have come from some temple, yet since the latter is simply the lowest moulding on a block that contains not only the broad moulding with the maeander pattern but also the coping, this whole top part could not by any possibility have come from a temple or any similar building.

(2) The maeander runs consecutively across the joints, which are carefully made, and so must have been painted on the blocks when they were in their present position. It is in the highest degree improbable that this example of the best architectural polychromy should have been painted in the Roman city where, as far as we can now discover, the fine old traditions of Doric polychromy were discarded. It points rather, as is shown by the examples cited on p. 310, to the fifth century B.C.

(3) The structure of the southeast corner alone excludes the idea of borrowing from other buildings. Here in spite of the base of later times which has been set into the system, enough of the corner is still seen to show that it is made of a single block with two contiguous triglyphs, one on each face. And this block was cut to fit the obtuse angle. One can hardly suppose that any other building existed in this neighborhood, with an obtuse angle at one of its corners !

(4) At one part of the east front, where the top block has been broken away, two of the triglyph blocks are seen to be

held together by a clamp of the form  $\Gamma$ , a form which is rarely used in Greece after the Persian War, and never after the fifth century B.C.<sup>1</sup>

(5) On the top of the triglyphon along the south front, as was said before, there is a continuous cutting for bedding another course, and in this course, where it is preserved, is another cutting apparently for bedding statue-bases. In the latter was found a base of black marble bearing the inscription  $\LambdaΥΞΙΠΡΟΞ ΕΠ$ .<sup>2</sup>

If any inference at all can be drawn from this base, it makes the triglyphon at least as old as the fourth century B.C.

(6) The difference between the connected system of bases marked on the plan as Greek, all made of soft poros stone, and all adjusted to the lines of the triglyphon, and the other bases to the east and west of the system, is so striking that one would have to use violence to bring them all into the same epoch. The obvious conclusion is that the *system* is Greek and that the *adjacent bases* are Roman.

(7) The massive base roughly let into the southeast corner of the triglyphon, destroying a part of it and hiding a much larger part, is simply the most westerly of a series of four bases rising to the same level. This complete disregard, almost contempt, of the triglyphon could not have been exhibited by the new settlers if they had already taken the pains to put it together. The inference is that the Romans placed the base, but found the triglyphon already existing and probably pretty well covered with earth.

<sup>1</sup> It is true that the clamp is made of lead only, without iron, which might suggest that we have here a trace of refitting, in which an old dowel hole was filled by simply pouring lead into it as a makeshift. But lead was perfectly adequate to meet any strain that might come upon this joint.

<sup>2</sup> It is true that the base was found lying bottom side upward in the cutting, and does not fill the whole cutting, but leaves a gap of 0.03 m. on each side; but as a thick layer of lead was found covering the bottom of the cutting, it seems likely that the base was really bedded there. Another poros base was found about 8 m. farther west at a much higher level, built into a wall, bearing the inscription  $\LambdaΥΞΙΠΡΟΞ ΕΠΟΗΞΕ$ . It seems clear from this that the great artist of the neighboring city found occupation here.



We have in a measure arrived at clearness in regard to three different levels in this quarter: a Byzantine level marked by a pavement of rather poor white marble, with some plaques which appear to be limestone, passing about a metre over the top of the triglyphon; a Roman level flush with the top of it; and a Greek level even with the bottom of it. This last rises in the rear of the fountain so rapidly that it there coincides with the Roman level a few paces to the west;<sup>1</sup> and all three

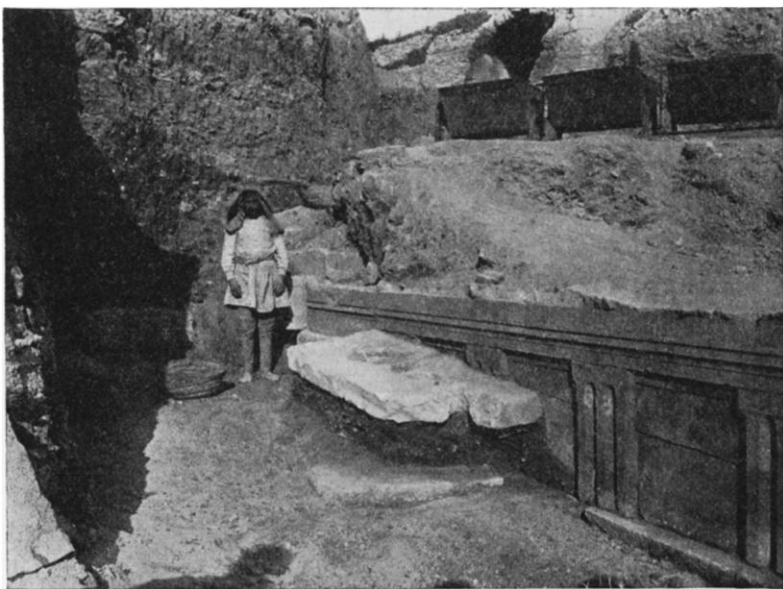


FIGURE 4.—LIMESTONE PLAQUE IN FRONT OF SOUTH FACE OF TRIGLYPHON.

levels coincide at the end of the excavation area of 1901, which is bounded by a line passing along the east end of the church of St. John Theologos and cutting the temple of Apollo a little

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 4 shows a large limestone plaque ascending along the south face of the triglyphon. Another similar plaque which was joined to it to the east was removed before we saw the significance of it. The two plaques formed part of a pavement, probably a street, the ascending line of which is marked by the working of the bases along the line. Under the plaque that was removed we found a silver Corinthian didrachma, apparently of the fifth century B.C., a corroboration, if one were needed, that the pavement is Greek.

to the west of the middle. The gradual approach of the Byzantine and the Roman levels may be seen in the high bank bordering the excavation area on the south. That the levelling-up in front of the front wall of the fountain chamber was done in Greek times, and not later, is shown by the character of the filling in front of the wall which closes the fountain room at the front. A few centimetres below the bottom of the triglyphon, just around the southeast corner, was found the handle of a vase with ΕΥΚΛΕ scratched upon it in letters of rather archaic appearance, especially the slanting epsilons. Another vase fragment found along the east front at a slightly lower level—a piece of a red-figured cylix showing a discobolus in the act of hurling his discus—cannot be later than the fourth century, and is probably earlier. These indications that the filling dates from Greek times are not confronted by any rebuttal in the other scanty finds therein.

That the Roman level was at the *top* of the triglyphon is shown by the level of the line of bases coming toward it from the east, the last one of which is cut into it. But this proof receives two interesting corroborations: first, in the fact that the triglyphon is so worn away at the top, especially at the north of the door, and, secondly, in the fact that the triangular base with truncated ends protruded in Roman times above the earth so much that some one found an occasion to cut in it the Latin letters NER.

If now, waiving any argument from the 4-formed clamp as to an earlier date, we stand upon the proofs that the triglyphon was as early as the times of Lysippus, the much greater depth of the façade with the lions' heads seems to imply a much earlier date. One can hardly think of the interval between the two which had brought about such a change of level as less than a century; and this would put the fountain itself back well into the fifth century B.C. It probably does go back to the very beginning of that century, and perhaps into the beginning of the sixth. Professor Furtwängler, in a casual view of the lions' heads, judged them from their style to belong to the

beginning of the fifth century or the end of the sixth. They are somewhat corroded and battered, and it has been difficult to procure good photographs of them from the original, owing to the defective light. But that given in Fig. 5, taken from a cast, conveys some idea of their rather archaic style, which enables us, without striving to find an ancient date for them, still to regard them, and with them the whole fountain, as a monument of the times before the Persian War.<sup>1</sup>

It is a wonderful chance that has preserved this ancient Greek fountain intact down to our day. It is, be it remembered, the only case of the kind. *Pirene* has been Romanized; *Glauce* has been destroyed; and one fate or the other has overtaken all other Greek fountains. It is difficult to explain how this came to be spared. Even the building up of the triglyphon around it seems to imply a practical abandonment of it in Greek times, inasmuch as it seems impossible for the water to have found an outflow when the level around the fountain was raised; yet it was somehow spared.<sup>2</sup> During the period of a hundred years, when the city



FIGURE 5. — LION'S HEAD FROM THE ANCIENT FOUNTAIN.

<sup>1</sup> They appear to vary more from each other than they really do, from the fact that one is thrust much farther into the wall than the other. The main difference is that one has larger eyes than the other. The size of both is about the same, if we take the distance from the roots of the mane to the tip of the lower jaw as a criterion. This measures in both 0.15 m.

<sup>2</sup> The lowest stone of the wall which crosses the northern channel of the floor of the fountain room does not quite prevent the escape of water; the southern one we have not been able to investigate. It is interesting to note that the accumulation of a lime deposit on the wall under the lions' mouths indicates that at some time the water ceased to come out with force, and only trickled down.

is said to have lain waste, the earth would naturally accumulate as high as the top of the triglyphon. But when the Romans rebuilt the city and placed the bases before mentioned, it seems incredible that they should not have found the opening into the lower level. Apparently it was the feet of that generation that wore away so much of the top of the coping near the door. The slightest inquisitiveness would have led them to find the staircase. We found it closed by a row of poros blocks about 0.15 m. thick, laid across the whole opening and level with the top step. A natural explanation of their presence is that the Romans placed them there to stop up the hole; and if they did so, it is a wonder that they let the lions' heads remain in the darkness of midnight rather than transport them to the Roman market or apply them to some new fountain. They were surely worth cutting out; but they remain.

When the later plunderers, barbarians of whatever race they might be, and when the Byzantines of the generation that thought to improve the Roman façade of Pirène, came upon the stage, this fountain was already deep under ground and safe from everybody except the modern archaeologist.

RUFUS B. RICHARDSON.

ATHENS,  
June 11, 1901.